1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

> migration of souls. Too often it has come about that the *Ibos* of a given plantation have agreed all to hang themselves, in order to return to their country."

So well recognized was this tendency of the Ibo slaves to commit suicide, that they were described in Créole by the formula: "*Ibos pend' cor' a yo* — The Ibos (are those who) hang themselves." None the less, many slaves from this tribe were acquired. Their strong communal and tribal ties made it advantageous for those who owned them to obtain more of them, since newcomers " were accorded help, care, and instruction by those who had preceded them."

According to St. Mery, the Negroes most common in the colony came from the Congo coast and Angola, and were known by the generic term *Congos*. The *Franc-Congos*, who came from the kingdoms of Congo and Angola, were

> " of a docility and gayety that makes them much desired. Loving song, dance, and ornaments, they make excellent domestics, while their intelligence, their facility in speaking a pure Créole, their jovial countenances without markings . . . cause people to prefer them for house-servants; they also make good laborers and good fishermen."

That the large numbers of Congo Negroes imported into Haiti have left no more of the elements of their culture in the island than are found is perhaps due to this very devotion to their masters, for a lively tradition of the present tells how, during the slave revolts, the Congo Negroes most often remained on the side of their masters and most often betrayed their fellows.

Not all the Negroes from the Congo area were as amiable as these just mentioned. The *Mondongos* had " the most execrable excess of eating their fellows." This quotation gains special significance because of the prominence which it has

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

been given through its use to substantiate the many charges of cannibalism in Haiti that have been made. Yet those who, desirous of establishing such cannibalism, quote this passage from St. Mery do not always remember to quote it in its complete context:

> "Some of these butchers of human flesh are also brought to Santo Domingo . . . where, as in Africa, they are the horror of the other Negroes, notably of the Congos, who, because of their nearness to them [in Africa], are most exposed to their cruelties." [4]

These are thus the tribes who were presumably the most important in the Negro ancestry of the Haitians of today. Was there any least common denominator in language which made it possible for slaves fresh from Africa to communicate with one another after their arrival in Haiti? Was there sufficient similarity in their cultures so that this might form the basis for a retention of African beliefs and behavior despite the vicissitudes of slavery? And what were the characteristics of the African civilizations of these people?

The picture of West African life, as it is commonly drawn, emphasizes the great number of small tribal groups following dissimilar modes of life, speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and worshipping different gods. In a very general sense this is not untrue. On the face of it, the number of languages that are spoken in the area from which the slaves were derived would seem to have constituted an effective barrier not alone to any concerted action on the part of slaves, but even to communication between them, especially since in many regions of the New World it was a fixed policy to separate slaves from the same tribe.

Yet behind this semblance of sharp dissimilarities lies a basic unity of language and culture in all of West Africa, so that though languages were and are mutually unintelligible, structurally and idiomatically they are much the same. This

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

000 754 795 775 754 266 114 he is accidentally fed salt. Though the concept has been presented in recent years with unjustifiable sensationalism to the reading public,[13] it is indisputably a living one. One aspect of it has been responsible for much of the conviction with which positive statements are made of personal knowledge of cannibalism in Haiti, as has been shown most clearly by Dr. Parsons:

[793] "A *gangi* who keeps a *zombi* may transform him into a stone, perhaps in front of his house, or into any kind of animal. Transforming him into a pig or sheep or cow, he may kill him and sell him in the market. In this belief we have the basis of the gossip and court testimony about human flesh sold in the market. It is *zombi* flesh, not human flesh, that is so disposed of. But foreigners know nothing about *zombi*, nor do the native witnesses explain in court what they have in mind when they are testifying to purchase of meat from the cemetery. 'People does *eat* people at Aux Cayes, I *know* it,' said Sam, as he told of human fingernails found on pigs' feet, explaining *to my question* that the pig had been a *zombi*. Had I not followed up his first statement and learned that he had never heard of anybody killed directly for marketing, an idea which amazed him at that, I would certainly have been left with an impression of cannibalism totally misleading."[14]

795 Precisely the same concept exists in Mirebalais as in Jacmel, where the foregoing material was collected, except that in its elaboration it underscores the point made in the quotation just given. *Zombi* meat can be recognized by the fact that it rapidly spoils, and when cooked, brings much white foam to the top of the stew, while such meat, sold as beef, turns white like veal; all this warns against eating it, and shows the active [796] distaste with which it is regarded. Indeed, one of the duties of a person's *loa* is said to be that of warning him when he is

[P.166]

15. Secret-Society Songs

575 171 Secret societies were once common in Haiti, as they were in other parts of the New World where West Africans settled in large numbers. The institution of the secret society was strong in various parts of West Africa from which the slaves came. The tradition was particularly notable among the tribes of Nigeria. In the New World it offered to slaves and to freed Negroes an opportunity for social organization and fraternal relationships which otherwise had been pretty well shattered by the nature of slavery and the profuse admixture of cultures. A number of elderly Haitians have [648] suggested that it was the Haitian secret societies rather than the Vodoun and Congo cults which fomented underground resistance and slave revolts against the French in the last years of the eighteenth century.

174 178 576 [496] At this late date it is difficult to reconstruct much of the secret-society picture. Such groups as may have survived until recently did so in vitiated and changed form. They have been supplanted in large measure by the *société*, a kind of mutual-aid association with both economic and recreational functions. It is exclusive, but not irrevocably so, and it is not secret. The société often corresponds roughly with the membership of a hounfor, or cult temple.

575 178 266 173 Old people still talk about true secret societies, however. There was a Moundongue secret society, separate from the Moundongue cult, whose members were recruited from the survivors of the Moundongue tribe and their descendants. Other secret societies were not based on tribal affiliation but were recruited from the population at large. One such group was the Vinbindingue, also known as the Blinbindingue and the Balbindingue. Its practices were feared. According to tradition, the Vinbindingue was predatory and held cannibalistic rites, as did other groups such as the Moundongue Society, the Cochon Rouge (the Red Pig Society), the Zeaubeaups, the Cochon Gris (the Gray Pig Society), and the Calinda 088 Society. How much of their reputation for cannibalism was deserved is

[Herskovits, Dahomey, I, P. 256. Cf. P. 353, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

How much of their reputation for cannibalism was deserved is a matter of speculation. Bizarre tales told by the colonists, as well as rumors and legends propagated about the societies by nonmembers who feared them, did result in a body of folklore which portrays these groups as malevolent. The societies themselves, no doubt, often supported such beliefs to increase the awe in which they were held.

In modern Haiti, however, there is no secret or fraternal society of the kind that probably existed in prerevolutionary days. Nor is there anything comparable to the Abakwa, or Carabali, an Ibo secret society that has survived in Cuba.[2]

Curiously enough, the most significant noncult organization in Haiti today is the Masonic order. Yet it has not remained distinct from the cults but has become interwoven with them. Many Vodoun and Congo services have rites or dances that are designated as Mazonne (Masonic). Houngans often feel that affiliation with the Masonic order offers distinction and prestige for the hounfor that the ordinary cult center does not have.

As for the Calinda, the Cochon Rouge, the Cochon Gris, the Zeaubeaup, the Vinbindingue, and the Moundongue societies, they appear to survive in name rather than in fact. The rumors and tales go on, as they do about zombies, devils and lou-garos. It is mostly at carnival time that their names are heard. A Mardi Gras band, appropriately costumed, may herald itself as a Calinda or a Cochon Rouge group. It will sing songs it regards as appropriate to the kind of effect it is trying to achieve. Such groups are not taken seriously. They are merely part of the carnival fun. But to members of older generations they do recall tales about the secret societies that met under the limbs of the mapou tree by torchlight to conduct their nocturnal affairs.

The songs that follow are reputed to belong to the Calinda, Vinbindingue, and Zeaubeaup societies; but they are infected with a frivolous quality which suggests they may have been heard for the first time in the carnival celebration rather than in the dark shadows of the mapou.

One of the legends concerning the Balbindingue, or Vinbindingue, is that of the dancing drum. The theme is a special one, but it is related to other stories about dancing calabashes in the Calbasse ritual and about dancing hoes. This song describes a gathering at such a dance:

Balbindingue!
C'est là n'homme mwé yé!
Cimbilve tonnerre!
Balbindingue!
C'est yun seul tambour qui dansé!
Pardon mon pire!
Balbindingue!
C'est là n'homme mwé yé! [Ex. 124]

2. [See Courlander "Abakwa Meeting in Guanabacoa," Journal of Negro History, XXIX (1944), 461ff. Cf. Coll. 116, P. 353. -- Analyst]

Balbindingue!
It is here my men are!
Cemetery thunder!
Balbindingue!
It is a single drum which dances!
Pardon, my father!
Balbindingue!
It is here my men are!

It is told of the Vinbindingue that their members are sometimes required to subject themselves to the ordeal of rubbing hot peppers in their eyes, which results in acute pain and temporary blindness. According to some explanations, this is one of the "tests" of a Vinbindingue man. Red, inflamed eyes are a standard symbol of malevolence. One informant explained that the Vinbindingue members blind themselves so that they cannot see what kind of flesh they are eating:

Jé'm pété m'pas wè ladans ma métié piment!
Jé'm pété m'pas wè ladans ma métié diffé! [Ex. 125]

My eyes are blind, I can't see, I've put pepper in them!
My eyes are blind, I can't see, I've put fire in them!

Another Vinbindingue song is a humorously macabre dialogue between the members of the society and a victim. He is asked whether he would prefer to be quartered or eaten whole. Each time they are about to act according to his wishes he changes his mind:

Dévor a déquatier ça ou *pitôt*? Déquatier!
C'est cancha dévoré ça ou pitôt?
Moin'm assez déquatier!

C'est cancha dévoré ça ou pitôt?
Dévor a déquatier ça ou pitôt?
Moin pitot dévoré!

Dévor a déquatier ça ou *pitôt*?
Dévor a déquatier ça ou *pitôt*?
Moin pitot déquatier! [Ex. 126]

Devoured or quartered, which do you prefer? To be quartered!
Cut up or devoured, which do you prefer?
I've been quartered enough!

Cut up or devoured, which do you prefer?
Devoured or quartered, which do you prefer?
I'd sooner be devoured!

Devoured or quartered, which do you prefer?
Devoured or quartered, which do you prefer?
I'd sooner be quartered!

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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A brief song identifies by name a man who has participated in a Vinbindingue affair:

Y'r é soi' Cimila mangé ti moune yo!
Y'r é soi' Cimila mangé ti moune yo! [Ex. 127]

Last night Cimila ate little children!
Last night Cimila ate little children!

533* 539* 575

A Calinda song speaks more tangently of its business. It refers to doing "washing," a very special kind of washing that requires no bluing:

Waille waille waille, savonné sans mêlé 'digo!
Waille waille waille, savonné sans mêlé 'digo! [Ex. 128]

Waille waille waille, wash without bluing!
Waille waille waille, wash without bluing!

533* 539* 575 775

And a Zeaubeaup song complains that a ouanga (a black-magic bundle) has been swallowed by a snake. It seems to specify that some of the members of the group are zombies, the animated dead:

L'Arcahaye nous là nous là!
L'Arcahaye nous là nous là!
L'Arcahaye, couleuve valé ouanga moin!
Ti ga'çons mes zeaubeaups, waille waille mes zeaubeaups!
Ti ga'çons mes zeaubeaups, waille waille mes zeaubeaups!
Ti ga'çons mes zeaubeaups, waille waille mes zombies!

Arcahaye I was there I was there!
Arcahaye I was there I was there!
At Arcahaye a snake swallowed my *ouanga*!
Young men, my zeaubeaups, *waille waille* my zeaubeaups!
Young men, my zeaubeaups, *waille waille* my zeaubeaups!
Young men, my zeaubeaups, *waille waille* my zombies!

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

755 Specialists in the magic of healing sometimes hit upon remarkable remedies, just as those who concentrate upon causing ailments learn the most effective ways of poisoning a victim's body or, by suggestion, of ruining his peace of mind. In the soil of infinite belief in spiritual powers the seeds of suspicion take firm root.

754 776 From the realm of recognized magic in which most natives at one time or another indulge, one crosses the threshold into a world of sorcery, perversion, and evil mystery. Here no normal person walks, for it is perilous ground. Here is no illumination from any loa or saint, but a grisly darkness coming down by tradition through centuries of whispered fear. From European folklore by way of French storytellers the Haitian peasant has taken the idea of the werewolf, whom he conceives always to be feminine. The male counterpart is the demon. These creatures are men and women who have a passion for eating human flesh and drinking human blood; cannibalism being abhorrent to normal persons, these abnormal ones through the blackest of magic are believed to be able to transform themselves into werewolves and demons, in which shape they glut themselves before effecting the change once more into human form. One does well to beware of persons with red eyes or black spots in the corner of the eye: these are the telltale marks of the cannibalistically inclined. No accredited ethnographer has ever received a direct report of encounter with werewolves or demons, but the haunting fear is present among the people. There is always an old man who lives in the next valley who has definite knowledge of them, and there are bocors who are "well known" to be able to give this vile power of lycanthropy to people. A person particularly afraid of werewolves will wear a special garde to ward off this evil.

754 776 From Africa comes the belief in the baka, an evil spirit who has a family resemblance to former Christian notions of the devil. The baka will make a bargain with a man, giving him some special power or greatly desired boon in return for the life of a member of his family. The bargain seems always to be cumulative, so that the mortal is never out of debt. When first one member of a family dies, and then a second and a third, the family is sure to consult a houngan in order to discover whether such an engagement exists. The knowledge apparently does little good, for the baka is always there at the appointed hour, mowing down one member after another until finally the bargainer himself is killed. One might wonder, since it is